Pam. S. Amer.

A Trip to Cuba

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FOREIGN DEPARTMENT OF WOMAN'S WORK

MORRO CASTLE, HAVANA, CUBA

A Trip to Cuba

Love at First Sight

AS you are aroused in the early morning from a profound, wave-rocked slumber by the call of "Havana! Havana!" and hasten to the deck of your steamer, you rub your eyes again to be sure you are awake: the dreamlike beauty of the water dimpling and dancing under the rose-tinted lights of the early dawn, the long-curving line of the city with its picturesque Moorish buildings glistening in all the opaline hues, and right ahead of us frowning down upon this gentle amorous scene is the great gray fortification of Morro Castle and Havana. It is a case of love at first sight. You fall under the spell of Havana without time for resistance.

Romantic History

AND before the spell of mere beauty has waned, you are entranced anew with the historic interest of the place. You wander through the old Colon Cathedral, whose boasted wealth of vestments and gold and silver service is passed lightly by in search for the historic spot where the dust of Christopher Columbus rested through many centuries until returned to Seville a few years ago, after the Cubans finally threw off the Spanish yoke. Or you spend a golden afternoon loitering through the stately corridors and halls of La Fuerza, the oldest fort but one on American soil, built by De Soto while he

was governor of the island. You live over in reverie the long, anxious years with Dona Ysabel, his beautiful wife, whom De Soto left here to govern his turbulent subjects while he sailed away to discover our own great Mississippi.

Lovable People

BUT no one can linger long in Havana without recognizing that neither its beauty nor its history is its chief charm, but its people. Come, sit with me in the Plaza and watch its brilliant stream of promenaders: a handsome race of people, carrying themselves in lordly fashion, light-hearted, courteous, the dark-browed women, jewel-bedecked, trailing their lace gowns through the streets with regardless grace, with constantly fluttering fan keeping accompaniment to the merry flow of musical talk and laughter. No one has an expression of care or responsibility. A childlike, lovable, irresponsible, godless people! How we covet them for our Christ! *Cuba for Christ!* There will not be a more exquisite gem in "His Crown" than this brilliant, gay, glittering Island World when it has been "washed white in the blood of the Lamb."

Does Cuba Need Our Missionaries?

FOR four hundred years Cuba has been under a Christian government (Spanish-Romanist type); and one may well wonder why it is now necessary to send Protestant missionaries to this Christian land. After these centuries of undisturbed control, what do we find as the ripe fruit of Romanism? An impoverished, incapable, undeveloped people. As we traveled through the beautiful coast country between Havana and Matanzas, the

STREET IN HAVANA

scene everywhere dominated by the stately beauty of the royal palm, we were passing through the richest country in the world—a soil that will produce three crops of corn a year (or a perpetual harvest of sugar cane) without fertilizing. We saw it being plowed with the forked limb of a tree, drawn by an ox team and driven by a farmer who lives in a little hut, or "bohio," constructed of the bark and foliage of the royal palm, exactly after the fashion that Columbus found when he discovered the island, four hundred years ago.

Starving Time

SUCH sights as these prepare us to understand how it is possible that upon the richest soil in the world there occurred just a few years ago the terrible tragedy of the starving time—the culmination of the domineering and repressive policy of the Spanish government and the Romish Church when they are left untrammeled to work their own will. Just here Southern Methodism stepped in, picked up the wreckage of the starving time, and within ten years has built it into strong, capable, trustworthy character.

The Story of Mahreah Aleza

WHEN we were in Cienfuegos, one of our scholarship girls told us in quaint, pretty English her own story. Miss Hattie Carson, President of Colegio Eliza Bowman, then in Havana, had gone out into the horrors of this starving community and had rescued little Mahreah Aleza, the last survivor of her family—father, mother, sisters lying around her dead. Her little sister had gnawed off the ends of her fingers in the awful paroxysms of hunger. Mahreah's little starved body was nursed and nourished back to strength; and through these years she has been trained not only in body, but also in mind and heart, until now, a strong, capable

PALMS

young woman, she is fitted to go out into the world and take care of herself. But it transpires that she is not to go out into the world alone, for a romance has come into her life in the form of a young Protestant lover, who has finally convinced Miss Carson that he is worthy to pay court to her school-daughter. This is not done, however, after our fashion. It is not etiquette for him to call to see her or escort her to any public place; but he can bring gifts of fruits and sweetmeats to her teachers, with the request that they give a little to Mahreah Aleza. This he does to "sweeten his suit." How delightful for the teachers!

A Cuban Epworth League

BUT he can belong to the same Epworth League and occasionally look across the room at her and exchange a word at closing. We attended the Epworth League in company with all the scholarship girls of Colegio Eliza Bowman. And a spirited, up-to-date Epworth League it was, too—forty or fifty young people led by a fine young man preparing to enter the Methodist ministry. How beautiful and satisfying this fruitage of only ten years' growth of Methodism in Cuba! Such glorious singing, a reverent, intelligent study of God's Word, a reverent kneeling in prayer, and earnest, unhesitating testimony. I saw nothing in Cuba that shows more strongly the contrast between Catholicism and Methodism. We attended a number of Catholic services—during Holy Week, too—but saw practically no young people in the congregation. Catholicism seems to make no provision for and no appeal to young people. The singing is done by a splendid choir in a high loft. No congregational singing—and yet I have never seen people love to sing as much as

"BOHIO"

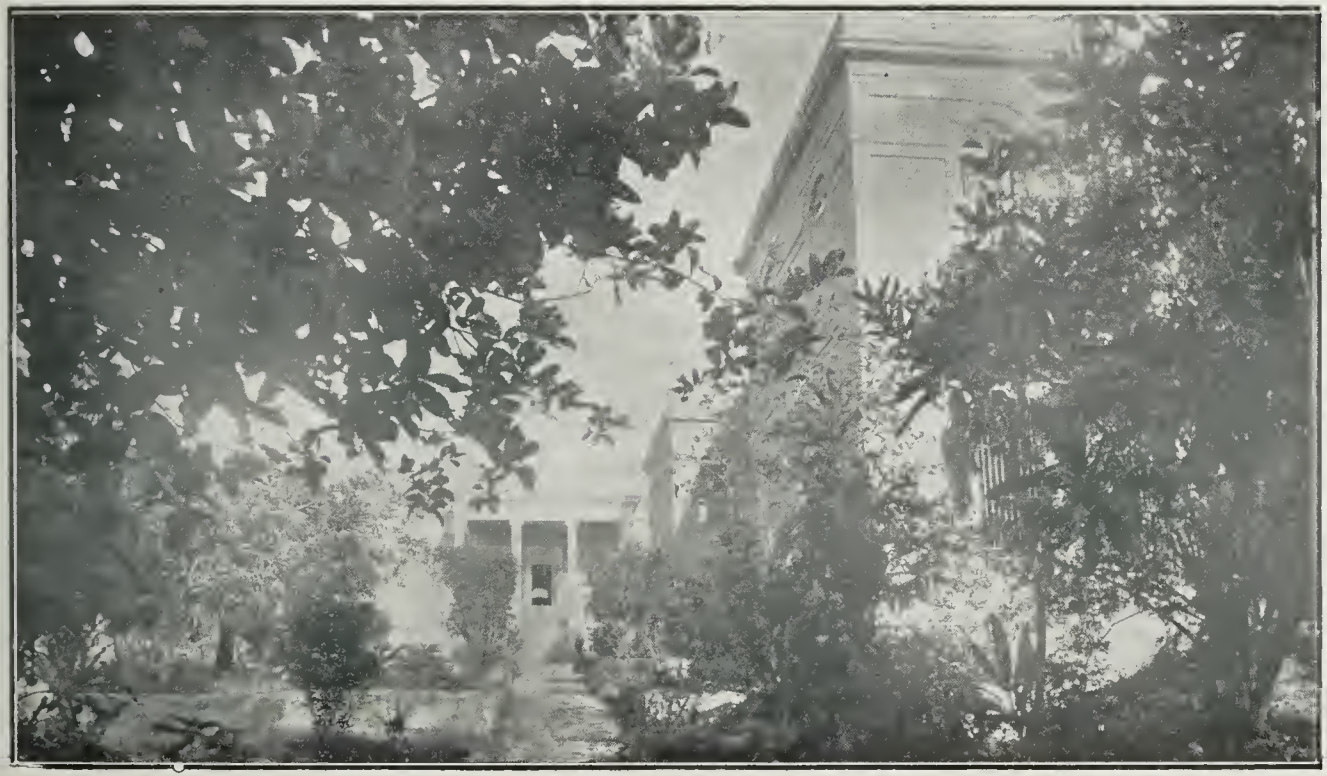
the Cubans. The prayers are in an unknown tongue, the whole service monotonous, lifeless, and unintelligible, and the reading of the Bible violently opposed.

The Bible in Colegio Irene Toland

IN our splendid school in Matanzas every one of our two hundred pupils is compelled to read the Bible each day in class. Two young ladies from a strong Catholic family, at the time of the daily Scripture-reading, took their Bible gingerly between their fingers, first covering it with their handkerchiefs so they would not have to touch it, as if it were unclean. They held it thus at arm's length while they read, but flung it away with loathing at the close. When the teacher remonstrated with them, explaining that it was God's precious letter to them, they replied that they were acting as the priest directed.

Matanzas the Cultured

MATANZAS is a literary center. It is called the "Athens of Cuba," and is the home of her greatest living poet. But in this very heart of culture, where our own Methodist college is doing such thorough, practical, and wise work, the chief joy and pride of the people is the Hermitage of Monte Serrate. We drove to the high hill overlooking the matchless beauty of the Yumuri Valley and crowned with this little chapel which enshrines a gorgeously bedecked image of the Virgin. In front of her sightless eyes stands a cabinet containing many curious objects. Here is a bride's wreath of orange blossoms, presented by some young girl with a longing in her heart for a



IRENE TOLAND SCHOOL, MATANZAS, CUBA

happy married life and knowing no better way to secure it. Silver images of legs, arms, ears, feet, the costly offerings of the maimed and diseased, are laid up before the blind eyes and pulseless heart of this *big doll*, representing the pitiful hope and belief and prayers of her ignorant worshipers. And this not in spite of, but by the encouragement of, the Roman Catholic priesthood in the *most enlightened center of Cuba*. Are you ready to answer with me the question, "Does Cuba need Protestant missionaries?"

The Fruitage of Methodism

GOD has shown his approval of our work in Cuba by his guidance and blessing, so that after only ten years of consecrated effort Methodism is established in every capital city in Cuba and leads all other Protestant denominations in its conquest of the "Island Beautiful" for our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.